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ALBERT SAMUEL GATSCHET — 1832-1907

Albert Samuel Gatschet, philologist and ethnologist, son of the Reverend Karl Albert Gatschet and Mary Ziegler, was born in Saint Beatenberg, Switzerland, October 3, 1832, and died at his home in Washington, D. C., March 16, 1907.

The mother dying when he was about ten years old, the boy came under the care of his elder sister, Louise, for whom to the day of his death he cherished always the most tender affection. This childhood bereavement, which was accentuated by the austere disposition of his father, by throwing the child upon his own lonely resources, left a deep impress upon his after life. After some years at the lyceums of Neuchatel and Bern, where already he displayed a marked linguistic aptitude, he entered the University of Bern in 1852, spending six years here and later at the University of Berlin, with special attention to languages, history, art, and theology, his favorite studies being the Greek language and doctrinal criticism. At one time it was even his intention to enter the ministry, but the linguistic bent overmastered this desire, and later in life he ceased to regard spiritual things. The great Humboldt was then in Berlin, still writing books in his ninetieth year, and the inspiration of his wonderful career was not lost upon young Gatschet who patterned after him in depth and range of knowledge.

On completing his course at the university he returned to his native city, where he became a contributor to various scientific and literary journals. In 1867 he published his first large work, *Orts-etymologische Forschungen*, a philologic study of Swiss place-names in their Keltic, Latin, German, French, and even Arabic origins. It is still the standard authority. He soon after spent a study season in the museums of Paris and London. In January, 1868, he emigrated to America and took up his residence in New York city, where for some years he continued as a teacher of languages and an industrious contributor on scientific subjects to both foreign and domestic journals, writing with equal fluency in French and German, as well as, with less ease, in English.



ALBERT SAMUEL GATSCHET, ÆT. 61.

Up to this period, with the exception of some indeterminate work of Schoolcraft and others, very little scholarly study of the native American languages had been made since the time of Gallatin, himself also of Swiss birth. In 1872 Dr Oscar Loew, a German botanist and student of languages attached to the Geographical Survey West of the 100th Meridian under Lieutenant Wheeler, brought back from southwestern United States sixteen Indian vocabularies, which he placed for examination in the hands of Dr Gatschet, to whom they proved of intense interest as opening up an entirely new field of linguistic research. The important results of his comparative studies of these vocabularies appeared in the annual reports of the Wheeler Survey for 1875 and 1876, and also in a German paper under the title of *Zwölf Sprachen aus dem Südwesten Nord-amerikas*, published at Weimar in the latter year. In this way he came to the notice of Major J. W. Powell, then in charge of the Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, by whom he was tendered a position as ethnologist, which he accepted in March, 1877, removing to Washington, where he thenceforth resided until his death, except when absent in the field. His first work in this capacity was the arrangement and classification for future study of the large collection of Indian linguistics then in possession of the Smithsonian Institution. Later in the same year he visited a number of problematic tribes in California and Oregon, making a beginning of the Klamath studies which afterward expanded into a great monograph.

On the organization of the Bureau of American Ethnology under Major Powell in 1879, Dr Gatschet became an original member, continuing with it until his retirement in 1905.

The earlier years of his Bureau connection were spent chiefly in active field service, with intervals of office work occupied in elaborating the results. In 1881 he brought to a close an exhaustive study of the linguistic material recorded by Father Pareja from the Timucua tribes of northern Florida in 1612-14, and established the fact that the Indians of the Florida missions of the St John region, long since extinct, constituted a distinct linguistic stock. In the same year he visited the remnant of the famous Catawba in South Carolina, and obtained a large body of material, by a comparison of

which he demonstrated that these people and the allied tribes were a part of the great Siouan stock of the western plains and in all probability the parent branch. Hale had already shown such a relationship for the Tutelo of Virginia in 1870, and Gatschet finally clinched the proposition by resurrecting the language of the Biloxi of southern Mississippi in 1886.

In the winter of 1881-82 he visited the remnant tribes of Louisiana, for some of which his work forms the sole basis of linguistic classification. In the winter of 1884-85 he visited a number of tribes in Oklahoma, Texas, and southwestern Louisiana, making discovery of two new stocks, besides greatly enriching the general sum of ethnologic knowledge for the southern region.

On a third visit to Louisiana, in 1886, he discovered the remnants of the Biloxi and Tunica, putting both languages on record for the first time, and thus establishing the Siouan connection of the one and proving the other to constitute an additional distinct stock. He then crossed the Rio Grande into Tamaulipas, Mexico, just in time to get about all that was left of the Carrizo language from the last half-dozen persons who spoke it, being almost the sole surviving representatives of the Pakawan stock which once held both banks of the lower Rio Grande. This journey extended as far south as the Tlascaltec colony of Saltillo, Mexico.

His studies of the Gulf tribes were summarized in his elaboration of the *Creek Migration Legend*, published in two volumes in 1884 and 1888. This was supplemented by his study of the extinct Karankawa tribe and language, published in 1891. In these southern researches, particularly in the documentary sources of information, his intimate knowledge of French and Spanish proved an invaluable equipment.

At the same time, as throughout his active career, he was independently giving attention as opportunity permitted to Indian languages past and present, in every section of the country, partly by sifting of old missionary catechisms and similar forgotten documents; partly by utilizing vacation trips, but chiefly by systematic interviewing night after night of the numerous Indian delegates visiting Washington during the Congressional sessions. Most of this miscellaneous material is still in manuscript. As ethnologic editor

for various journals he noted the progress of scientific discovery in the extra-limital regions, so that it is doubtful if there is an important native language from the Arctic shores to Cape Horn that has not at some time been the subject of his personal attention. Among these miscellaneous studies one of the most important was that upon the Beothuk, an extinct people of Newfoundland, which also he established as a distinct stock.

In 1890 appeared his great monograph on *The Klamath Tribe and Language of Oregon*, published in two parts as Volume II of Contributions to North American Ethnology, and comprising altogether more than 1,500 quarto pages. The material was procured by extended research among the Klamath on their home reservation, supplemented by visits to their cousins, the exiled Modoc in eastern Oklahoma. As an exhaustive study of an American language it stands almost alone and may fairly be said to mark an epoch in the science of linguistics.

In the historic Algonquian area, covering two-thirds of eastern United States and Canada, Dr Gatschet had personally given attention to some fifteen cognate languages or dialects. Shortly after the publication of his Klamath monograph he was commissioned by the Bureau to collate these results into a comprehensive comparative grammar of the Algonquian languages. In this great undertaking, which might well have been the life choice of a younger man, he was engaged when stricken by the lingering illness which culminated in his final disability and retirement. His initial labor in this direction centered upon the Peoria, representing the famous Illinois confederacy, once the leading people of the Ohio region, but now reduced to a small mixed-blood remnant in eastern Oklahoma. For this language his manuscript material in possession of the Bureau and awaiting final elaboration by a future worker is probably equal in extent to that of his published Klamath work. The dictionary portion alone contains some ten thousand listed words.

Besides the publications already noted, Dr Gatschet was the author of a large number of shorter papers on special linguistic subjects in English, French, and German, on both sides of the water. He edited for years a series of linguistic and ethnologic

notes in *The American Antiquarian*, and contributed frequent reviews to the *American Anthropologist*, *The Nation*, *Science*, *The American Naturalist*, and other journals.

His manuscript linguistic material deposited with the Bureau of American Ethnology covers nearly one hundred languages and dialects, including, among others, Achomawi, Adai, Alibamu, Apache, Arapaho, Attacapa, Bannock, Bidai, Biloxi, Caddo, Catawba, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Chickasaw, Chimariko, Choctaw, Chumash, Clackama, Clatsop, Coahuilteco, Comanche, Comecrudo, Cotonam, Delaware, Guatuso, Haname, Havasupai, Hitchiti, Isleta, Kalapuya, Kansa, Karankawa, Kickapoo, Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, Klamath, Koasati, Kutenai, Lipan, Maidu, Maya, Miami, Micmac, Modoc, Mohawk, Molala, Muskogi, Muskwaki, Mutsun, Narraganset, Natchez, Nez Percé, Ojibwa, Ottawa, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Peoria, Potawatomi, Queres, Sauk, Seminole, Seneca, Shasta, Shawnee, Shetimasha, Shoshoni, Tlascaltec, Tonkawa, Tunica, Umpqua, Warmspring, Wichita, Yavapai, Yuchi, and Zuñi.

His close attention to study, to the neglect of physical well-being, at last brought about a complication of diseases which grew more serious with advancing age, resulting in his retirement from the Bureau in the spring of 1905. From that period the malady progressed rapidly to the close. His wife, who survives him, was his constant attendant to the end, as for years she had been the helpful companion of his work and travels.

Funeral services, conducted by the Reverend G. C. Carter, of St Andrew's Episcopal Church, were held on Tuesday afternoon, March 19, at the residence, where tributes to the memory of the friend and scholar were paid by several of his old associates, notably by Major Gilbert Thompson, of the United States Geological Survey, a comrade of his earliest governmental service thirty years before. The interment was made on the following day at Mount Peace Cemetery in Philadelphia.

Dr Gatschet was a member of the American Folk-lore Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Philological Association, American Philosophical Society, Anthropological Society of Washington, Washington Academy of Sciences, National Geographic Society, Anthropological Society of

Vienna, Historical Society of Canton Bern, and of other scientific, literary, and political organizations, besides which, following a common Swiss custom, he held a beneficiary membership in the Bookbinder's Gild of Bern. He was also a member of the local Swiss society, the Grütli Verein. In 1892 the University of Bern conferred upon him the doctor's degree.

The village of St Beatenberg, in the picturesque Bernese oberland, looks out across the blue Brienzersee to the snow-capped Jungfrau with its background of dark forest and glistening glacier. The daily contemplation, in his formative period, of the panorama of lake and mountain, perennial verdure and eternal desolation, bred in Gatschet, as in all his countrymen and women, the intense love of Nature in her greater aspects that to the Swiss exile becomes a latent Heimweh to which the sight of a distant hill or the sound of a clear flowing stream is like the challenge of the Alp horn on the bridge of Strasburg. Under the surface, and unknown to all but his most intimate companions by reason of many peculiarities of temperament and foreign habit, he carried the soul of a poet and the heart of a little child. He loved music, of which he had considerable technical knowledge, and was as familiar with the great operatic composers as with the German poets. He needed no dictionary for his classical quotations. His knowledge of history was wide and profound, and his grasp of the ordinary subjects of scholarly interest was apparent to the most casual listener. Having no gift for speaking or organization, he seldom participated in scientific gatherings, but preferred to work alone and by his own method. In fact, it was practically impossible for him to collaborate upon a joint undertaking. His chief characteristics were thoroughness and absolute honesty. He had no patience with the pseudo-science which finds it easier to elaborate theories than to search out facts. In his own words, in rebuke of one such instance, "To guess is not science." Secure in his own honor, he made no attempt to build up a reputation at the expense of other men, but gave to each his due credit. Loyal in his friendships, he was quickly responsive, and held a promise as an obligation. He found his chief relaxation in long country walks, and in the last weeks of his life, when strength and memory were gone, his thoughts were of the moun-

tains, and he imagined himself climbing the Alps with the sister of his childhood.

The science of philology is hardly yet naturalized in this country, and from its very nature can find appreciation only in the highest circle of scholarship, but within this circle Gatschet's work was recognized as authoritative. When philology shall take its proper place as the essential basis of anthropology his name will stand, with those of his distinguished countrymen, Gallatin and Agassiz, in the front rank of American science.

*Ihr Matten, lebt wohl !
Ihr sonnigen wieden !
Der Senne muss schieden,
Der Sommer ist hin.*

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¹ This list of Dr Gatschet's writings does not include the hundreds of linguistic, ethnologic, ethnographic, and bibliographic notes and reviews published in various scientific and literary periodicals.

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